

Testimony of Carol E. Walter, Executive Director

RE: In support of H.B. No. 5016, AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S
RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING GENERAL GOVERNMENT

**Before the Appropriations Committee
March 8, 2012**

Senator Harp, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony and on behalf of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, thank you for your leadership in preventing and ending homelessness in Connecticut.

I am here once again to support Governor Malloy's historic affordable housing proposals, and today I testify specifically in support of H.B. No. 5016. I have spoken to many of you and many other advocates, providers and state employees regarding this proposal over the last several weeks: the challenges and opportunities, its potential impact on our fight to end homelessness in Connecticut over the long term, and the possible effect that it could have on programs which comprise our homeless crisis response system in the short term.

As the Executive Director of CCEH I re-iterate our support for this measure because it is so vital that shelter, transitional housing, security deposits, rental assistance, prevention, rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing services AND resources are consolidated and woven together if we are to prevent and reduce homelessness in our state. This goal is within our reach and without a deep alignment of these programs with dedicated and specific leadership singularly committed to this common goal we will continue to win our small battles but will lose the war, because our interventions are too fragmented, solitary and do not target the right services to the right people at the right time.

As you consider the consolidation of various housing assistance programs into the Department of Economic and Community Development, I must note that the rental assistance program is the single most effective intervention to end family homelessness and we also urge you to expand access to subsidies by adding 100 RAPs to the Appropriations budget you develop for April. This will likely house more than 300 people in eligible families. This would stabilize families and reduce demand on shelters that are forced to turn away families with young children every day. Thousands of families remain on the waiting list for the State Rental Assistance Program with literally no new vouchers available for this general population of our poorest neighbors.

Resources and good sound policy at the federal and local level will provide communities with the tools to end homelessness, and regardless of which state department is in charge, our ability to prevent and end homelessness in any appreciable way depends upon what

happens on the ground in our communities and on our streets. The federal strategic plan, the HEARTH Act and the new Opening Doors CT all articulate this reliance on community and grassroots momentum.

CCEH and other sister intermediary organizations will be critical during this transition as we know the services and the programs more intimately than anyone in state government. Where the Department of Social Services relies on us for expertise, technical assistance and a connection to the service providers who both contract with the Department and are members of our coalition, we expect that the Department of Economic and Community Development will depend on us as the content experts on homelessness in Connecticut, the programs that serve them and most importantly the most efficient and effective way to create a housing based crisis response in Connecticut. We are in this for the long haul and are committed to making this work, regardless of which state agency becomes responsible for these programs.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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